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ABSTRACT

In order to gain information about what experiences limited-budget libraries have had with approval plans, a questionnaire was drafted to survey these libraries. The results of the questionnaire are presented in this paper. Twenty-four of the thirty-one libraries surveyed, responded. Responses to each of the questions asked are presented. In general it was apparent that all acquisitions librarians have to abide by the limitations of their institutions and that they are subject to control by the faculty. Many were concerned with the tie-in with one dealer, and they wished more jobbers would participate in approval plans. As a result of the survey and other factors, it was decided to set up a plan to cover all the areas of the university of New Mexico's curriculum. Preparations to implement the approval plan were completed and the plan was put into operation. The plan which has been in operation for seven months appears to be effective. (Author/NH)

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APPROVAL PLANS: a survey

by

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In late Spring, 1969 a panel of surveyors from the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools made a trip to the University of New Mexico for accreditation purposes. Their report, which was filed in early Summer, 1969, was very critical of the University and said that "The financial support of the University of New Mexico is inadequate to the range of programs carried on in the University."[1]

Their evaluation paper stated "Library holdings and library functioning are grossly inadequate for an institution carrying on a graduate program. Most of these deficiencies are cumulative."[2]

Some complimentary remarks were made including this one: "Quality does not seemed to have suffered seriously..., but it is threatened by the lack of funds."[3] The paper also stated: "The library is one of the weakest resources in the institution."[4] Some of the criticism was not fully warranted, in my opinion, but it was evident that some action had to be taken by the library faculty to restore confidence in the library and to point out that some of the weaknesses were due to lack of funds, inadequate staff, low morale and salaries and insufficiency of holdings.

The library faculty and staff began a self-evaluation program and studied the problems involved and began to try to seek solutions to improve the situation both in processing and public services. My chief concern was with the means of improving our order and receiving processes.

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[1] North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. Commission on Colleges and Universities. Report of a Visit to the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico. April 28-May 1, 1969. Revised Copy. (The Association, 1969), p. 2.

[2] Ibid., p. 8

[3] Ibid., p. 9

[4] Ibid., p. 9

One program strongly supported by the Director of Libraries and the professional staff, the Library Committee and the Academic Vice-president was consideration of an approval plan to obtain books more rapidly, allow for examination of books received, reduce clerical and professional time and to strengthen the library holdings in all fields of the curricula of the University.

To make a better case for more money to carry through an effective approval program, the library literature was scanned to see what could be learned from the experiences of other libraries. Unfortunately, the literature on approval plans and practical experiences was limited. Studies made by Norman Dudley of the University of California and David O. Lane of Hunter College were useful; but these research projects took into consideration most of the wealthy libraries of the nation. They were not typical enough to aid in trying to present to the officials of a financially-poor state a good example. These institutions with their high budgets would not give good comparisons for use in our state institutions.

The author attended a meeting of the Third Annual Seminar on Approval and Gathering Plans for Medium and Large-sized Academic Libraries held in West Palm Beach, Florida on February 17-20, 1971. Several interesting facts were brought out. One was that it was apparent that the wealthier the library, the broader the approval plan; second, it was possible to set up an

approval plan with a limited budget if a library chose to set up its requirements within specific profiles of materials offered by the book jobber; and third, it was apparent that a survey of state-supported university and college libraries within the Rocky Mountain and Western States would be more logical than information based on studies of the Association of Research Libraries, the majority of which were well supported financially.

Determined to make a study of the institutions in the sprawling and money-parched lands of these state, the author visited ten state institutions in Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Washington and Utah for background information. With this beginning it was soon evident that some of the libraries participated in approval buying and others did not; and that in order to obtain more concrete comparisons it would be necessary to use a questionnaire to set up an informational data bank.

Knowing that librarians are not overly-fond of questionnaires and the author, having little extensive experience in drafting one, did spend much time trying to c onceive a number of questions that would give the largest data base available in order to obtain a rather vast reservoir of information. It was evident that the final draft sent out was not a complete success as several libraries felt that "Too many questions are not compatible with our statistical records" and "This questionnaire is too long and detailed and ambiguous to answer with our limited staff".

However, many librarians were interested enough in the study to answer, for twenty-four out of thirty-one libraries consulted responded to the questionnaire. Along with information obtained from librarians interviewed personally in June 1971, data was obtained from a total of twenty-eight institutions by December 1971.

As this information may be of interest to other librarians, educators and persons involved in library budgets and operations, as well as to those who participated in the survey, a summary of the information gained is listed.

The first three questions asked for enrollment figures--graduate and undergraduate--as well as a listing of budgets for books and serials. The purpose was to obtain data on the average spent per capita per student for support of the library program. Twenty one libraries responded and the sums were divided in this fashion:

Five libraries expended between:	$20. - $29.
Nine libraries expended between:	30. - 39.
Five libraries expended between:	40. - 49.
Two libraries expended between:	50. - 59.

The remainder did not list their budgets or student enrollment.

Question four covered information on which libraries had an approval plan? Eighteen libraries listed they participated in the Richard Abel and Company plan, three used the Baker and Taylor Company, one library used Bro-dart for technical books; and one institution received only book approval forms from Abel.

Curious as to what effect the approval plan had on libraries which used departmental allocations similar to that of the University of New Mexico, questions five and six were

requests for information on the compatibility of the approval plans with their system of budgeting. Fifteen libraries replied that they used the departmental allocations plans; twelve deducted a line item from the departmental budget for the current domestic book approval plan; and four libraries stated that allocation plans for departments had been eliminated for some time.

The librarians were asked in question seven if they had partial approval plans for specific subjects. Evidently this question was not considered pertinent as six replied that they had limitations; six indicated no limitations and the remainder did not answer.

What percentage of the total budget was used for an approval plan was question eight. Three libraries with limited plans gave their percentages as 1.8, 3, and 5.2. Libraries with a full approval program listed the following:

1	10%	2	35%
1	15%	1	40%
7	20-25%	1	50%
2	26-30%	4	no reply
		4	percent not available

The librarians were asked in question nine if there were language limitations. Ten of the libraries said their programs were limited to the English language, six others did include some foreign languages: German, French, Spanish and Russian. The remainder did not reply.

Do you believe your approval plan brings you most of the items you would have ordered under normal procedures was the request stated in question eleven. Fifteen libraries expressed satisfaction with the plan; two said their receipt of books were a "low miss" and the others did not answer the question.

A query about the promptness of receipt of the book after publication was next. Thirteen libraries were pleased with the service; five said their service was erratic and uneven; and ten did not answer this question.

Enquiry was made as to what services the libraries had in acquiring serials under this system. Nine libraries reported they asked for the first volume to be sent for decision; four received forms or announcements of new serial publications and three others stated they received no serials on the approval plan. Eleven did not reply to this question.

Question fourteen requested information taken on specific requests from the faculty for various titles. Eleven libraries answered that they anticipated the books would come in on the automatic plan; six ordered the book separately if it did not come within a limited time period which had been specified; and two ordered immediately and accepted duplicates.

Do you order duplicates under the plan was question fifteen. Ten libraries answered that duplicates were not purchased; seven gave no answer; four said that they did duplicate and six stated their records were kept in such fashion that they could not answer this question.

If duplicates were not ordered from the approval dealer, how were additional copies received? was question sixteen. Three libraries reported they ordered the additional copies from another dealer; six placed a regular order with the approval dealer; and three indicated they did not purchase duplicates due to budget limitations.

Question seventeen dealt with bibliographic aids. Replies indicated that only five libraries checked with the standard bibliographic aids; eight libraries regularly checked their order files and ten libraries checked their card catalogs. Notes added as general comments indicated that since most items received were new publications much time and money were saved as personnel did not need to check the bibliographic references.

Little comment was made to question eighteen which asked: "If you do not use any type of approval plan, would you please state briefly why your institution was not interested?" Only two persons answered this question and their replies were: "Insufficient budget to make the plan work!" and "Lack of faculty interest, budget limitations and staff shortages."

What contribution do you think the approval plan makes to the acquisition process was phrased in question nineteen. Answers were extremely varied and tabulation was not possible. The more pertinent answers are stated as follows:

> "We are pleased with the approval plans as they bring in materials faster."
>
> "The plans are an aid to libraries with a limited staff as they simplify ordering, invoicing and selection."

"The system brings in books that might be overlooked under normal ordering procedures; it is excellent for collection building."

"The plans are only limited for success by the size of the library's budget."

"I am concerned about the sameness of the collections of all libraries; however, I do like the constant flow of new titles into the library."

"The lack of representation of small presses is regretable."

One librarian was somewhat concerned about the possibility of receiving books that would be considered 'deadwood'. However, since one can easily reject items not wanted this does not appear to be a detrimental situation. It does mean that librarians must be careful to prepare profiles to eliminate material not wanted in their library.

Question twenty asked participating librarians whether they felt that there were savings in the use of the approval plan programs. Fifteen libraries answered that some time was saved in clerical work of typing and in bibliographic checking. Professional time was also saved since the system did not require extensive checking in brochures, reviews, and bibliographies. Other savings were evidenced in invoicing procedures and handling of the manifold order forms. Printing cost for order forms was also reduced. Some cataloging time was saved in supplementary information supplied by the jobbers on the manifold slips.

Questions twenty-one, twenty-two and twenty-three had queries regarding the selection and rejection of the materials received on approval and percentage of returns. In the majority of the libraries, the librarians were responsible for selection; but in five libraries they were aided extensively by the faculty. One library had a selection office staffed by a professional librarian who was aided by faculty representation.

Only fourteen libraries kept some records of rejections of books received on approval. One library stipulated they had a five percent rejection rate at the beginning of the fiscal year; but as their budget decreased, their rejections increased to approximately 20%. Other rejection figures were compiled as follows:

Four libraries rejected from 5 to 10 %
Five libraries rejected from 11 to 20 %
One library rejected 25 %
One library rejected 31 %
One library rejected 50 %

The remainder did not keep statistics on rejections.

In answer to question twenty-four: "Do you follow up in any way titles that you feel have not been included in the plan under your profile arrangement?" Eleven libraries stated they had established follow-up procedures to procure titles they felt should have come on the plan; no answer was given by others using the plans.

The final question asked for additional remarks that the participants might wish to make regarding approval plans

in general. Only eight libraries made additional comments as follows:

> Approval plans in some cases were a necessity and use of them was favorable, but they had some problems which appeared unsolvable; but that his would not deter them from using the plans.
>
> One library planned on cancelling the plan; but only because of budget cuts. Science and engineering groups usually did not favor the plans; but humanities and social science faculties were favorable.
>
> The library that was rejecting fifty percent of the titles received also remarked that their low budget and need to restrict their subject areas made the program difficult to operate and that they received too many 'peripheral titles'.
>
> Remarks repeated by several institutions were that the plans were excellent for a prosperous library but too expensive in time for evaluation of books when funds were limited as too many had to be rejected.
>
> One library was giving up the system because of budget cuts; but it was planning to continue to receive from the supplier the manifold order forms to aid in their book selection.
>
> Several comments conceded the excellence of the system as it gave broad coverage, better service and some savings in time and money from a clerical standpoint.
>
> One librarian commented that selections received in some areas were not as good as others; but that it did not feel it could operate without the plan.
>
> Another commented that the approval plan should be comprehensive enough to make the parameters easily definable and that it should be adequately funded.

In general the information received was very helpful. It is apparent that all acquisition librarians have to abide by the limitations of their institutions and that they are subject to some control by the faculty. However, in discussions with various librarians on a face-to-face basis, it was evident that many were concerned with the tie-in with one dealer; although in fact they did not apply the majority of their budgets to the approval plan. Many expressed the hope that more jobbers would participate in approval plans. A few that did have approval plans with specific publishers stated that although discounts were better, the fact they had to type order slips for books kept, did add to the cost and thereby did reduce the discounts even though the cost was not apparent.

When the statistical information was relayed to the UNM Library and members of the teaching faculty and the officials involved, the library staff was authorized to hold meetings with representatives from two companies: Richard Abel and Company of Portland, Oregon and the Baker and Taylor Company of Reno to discuss their plans. No attempt was made to invite the Bro-dart Company or the Midwest Library Book Company as their programs appeared to be too limited.

After the meetings with the two major organizations mentioned and a thorough discussion of their programs and profile arrangements, the faculty representatives and librarians approved the Richard Abel program. One factor was that they had been our jobbers during the previous partial program experiment in 1969-70 when fourteen departments had permitted the library acquisition

staff to do some approval plan work on a limited basis. The plan had been successful to some extent, but it had been terminated because of over-spending in some areas, difficulty of obtaining permission to purchase inter-disciplinary items, problems created by the differences in defining series and serials, and other petty misunderstandings. However, the ideology of the program appeared to be sound and it had shown the possibilities of bringing in a wide variety of useful materials. The general tone of the answers to the questionnaire also was judged favorable and did influence the decision to approve the system.

The result of all the above factors was to set up a plan to cover all the areas of the University's curriculum and to allott a line item of $100,000 to the program. Elaborate profiles were prepared for all departments of the University--thirty-six in number. Both library and teaching faculty were involved, with the library bibliographers being aided by the subject librarians and representatives from each of the university's teaching departments as noted above. Machinery to handle the books as they came in was defined and written out. After seven months of operation it appears to be effective.

An average of 250 books per week have been received since the program began the first week of September 1971. The books are placed in a separate room; they are alphabetized by the

Library of Congress designations given by the Abel Company on the manifold forms. These are dated and kept on the shelves for one week for perusal by assigned personnel as noted above. Items wanted are signed by the selectors; items rejected have a slip placed in them explaining why rejected. The rejections are returned once a week. Books kept are sent through the normal processing procedures and handled as any other order would normally be handled. To date much satisfaction has been expressed in the items received. It will be some time before a complete evaluation can be made and compared with the statements made in the questionnaire. Statistics will be kept and the information tabulated and comparisons will be made with the results obtained from other institutions. From the limited judgment that can now be made after nearly a year of operation, it is believed that the Zimmerman Library and the University of New Mexico's academic departments are benefiting from the utilization of the approval plan.

From records kept on rejection of the material it appears that it is well under the 10% limitation that we had set up as a goal. Profiles have been changed several times and the library does receive a large amount of manifold forms; but as the program continues it is anticipated that more books will be received. At the present time it has been decided to limit reprints purchases; but slips are received for these items. If budgets should increase in the future, it is very likely that the program will be expanded to foreign books.

The faculty and librarians of the University of New Mexico are looking forward to expanding other purchasing plans if the bond issue for subsidizing libraries throughout the state of New Mexico is passed. The approval plan methodology could be expanded to include international buying in specialty areas such as music, foreign languages, Latin American publications, ethnic books, audio-visual aids and other media and microform services which we currently cannot afford but which are available.

With a broad program allowed within the state, and not contingent upon federal funds, planning and continuity of receipt of material could be obtained and the programs of the library and the teaching colleges of the University of New Mexico would be very much enhanced.

List of Institutions which responded to the questionnaire:

Arizona, University of
Arizona State University
Boise State University
Central Washington State College
Chico State College
Colorado, University of
Colorado State University
Idaho, University of
Kansas, University of
Kansas State University
Missouri, University of (Columbia)
Missouri, University of (Kansas City)
Montana State University
Nebraska, University of
Nevada, University of
Oklahoma, University of
New Mexico State University
Oregon, University of
Oregon State University
Portland State University (Oregon)
San Diego State College
Texas, University of Texas at El Paso
Texas Technological University
Utah State University
Utah, University of
Washington, University of
Washington State University (Pullman)
Wyoming, University of